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Community Speech and Language Therapy

**Classroom support – Advice for staff in Primary Schools**

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT PUPILS WHO HAVE DIFFICULTIES WITH AUDITORY MEMORY AND/OR UNDERSTANDING SPOKEN LANGUAGE WITHIN THE MAINSTREAM CLASSROOM

**Introduction**

You will probably find that you are already using many of these strategies. These are some ways in which the child with auditory memory or receptive language (understanding) difficulties can be helped within the classroom.

* Make sure the pupil is positioned well, if possible close enough to you to ensure that they are paying attention; away from potential distractions; able to see you, the board and any visual materials clearly. The child with difficulties may choose to sit on the fringe and need extra encouragement to be involved.
* Check regularly that you have the pupil’s attention.
* Make sure the pupil is aware of the aim of each lesson, explain this at the beginning and put it on the board [use a picture/symbol/diagram if that is more appropriate than the written word alone].
* It may also help the pupil to know what’s coming next within each lesson. Write the key parts of the lesson on the board, or use symbols/simple diagrams/visual timetables for the non-reader.
* Wherever possible, follow the principle KISS [Keep It Short and Simple]. The child may easily be “over-loaded”. Reduce your language input in terms of sentence length, complexity of sentence and level of vocabulary. A lot of verbal input may be experienced as a barrage of words.(Ref: Hanen)
* Repetition and re-phrasing too quickly can interfere with the child’s processing. Try to wait; only repeat when it is clear that he has not understood. The first repetition should use the same words; only change the wording if the child still appears not to understand.
* Try to do one thing at a time, these pupils may find it difficult to attend to more than one thing, e.g. either writing or looking in books or listening. Flag up changes in the activity, making it clear what you are expecting the child to attend to at each time.
* Support verbal language as far as possible with visual materials, use gesture, pictures, real objects and symbols including the written word to facilitate their understanding of key learning points.
* Reinforce good listening skills and help the pupil to sift information for key points by flagging up in advance what it is that they need to listen out for, eg “after I’ve talked about… [general topic] I’m going to ask you about these things… [specific points of information]”
* Break down instructions into manageable chunks, using a clear sequence, “first…then…next…last…” [The pupil may only be able to retain two actions required or possibly only one; be aware of these limitations].

This is not an exhaustive list. There may be other things you are already doing that are also helping this pupil. (The page above can be printed and shared with school staff as a reminder of good classroom practice to support language).

Schools can find further advice and ideas in the Primary School Toolkit: share appropriate ideas and advice with the child’s Parents/Carers so they can support the child at home too.

**Alder Hey Community Speech and Language Therapy Department**

**Sefton (0151 247 6109) Liverpool (0151 295 3990)**

[**Childrensslt@alderhey.nhs.uk**](mailto:Childrensslt@alderhey.nhs.uk)

[Speech and language therapy - Alder Hey Children's Hospital Trust](https://www.alderhey.nhs.uk/services/speech-and-language-therapy/)

(click this link or type into search engine)

This leaflet only gives general information. You must always discuss the individual treatment of your child with the appropriate member of staff. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about your child’s treatment.

This information can be made available in other languages and formats if requested.

Alder Hey Children’s NHS Foundation Trust

Alder Hey

****Eaton Road

Liverpool

L12 2AP

****Tel: 0151 228 4811

[www.alderhey.nhs.uk](http://www.alderhey.nhs.uk)

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